

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DODE-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 ACDA-19 OMB-01

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EA:MSTEARNS (DRAFT)

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R 300008Z MAR 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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E.O. 11652 NA

TAGS: MOPS, TH

SUBJ: U. S. FORCE REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

1. AS BACKGROUND FOR POSSIBLE CONVERSATIONS WITH HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, ADDRESSEE POSTS MAY BE INTERESTED IN THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PLANNED U.S. FORCE REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND WHICH WERE ANNOUNCED IN BANGKOK ON MARCH 29.

2. THE WITHDRAWAL PLAN NOW UNDER DISCUSSION WITH THE RTG CALLS FOR REDEPLOYMENTS TO BEGIN ABOUT MAY 15 AND TO BE COMPLETED DURING 1974. BOTH STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL AIR-CRAFT WILL BE INCLUDED. THERE WILL ALSO BE REDUCTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH REORGANIZATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF HEAD-QUARTERS AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS. THE REDUCTIONS ARE EXPECTED TO RESULT IN DECREASE IN THE AUTHORIZED MILITARY MANPOWER SPACES FROM ABOUT 38,000 TO 28,000. IN TERMS OF PERSONNEL ACTUALLY IN THAILAND, THE NUMBER WILL BE REDUCED FROM THE

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CURRENT LEVEL OF ABOUT 35,000 TO ABOUT 27,000. WE ARE

NOT AT THIS TIME PREPARED TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF AIRCRAFT TYPES OR NUMBERS, THIS BEING SUBJECT TO CONSULTATIONS WITH THE RTG.

3. THESE WITHDRAWAL PLANS DO NOT REFLECT A CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY. PRIOR TO THE LAST MAJOR FORCE REDUCTION IN SEPTEMBER 1973, THE U.S. AND RTG AGREED THAT OUR REMAINING

MILITARY PRESENCE WOULD BE UNDER CONTINUING REVIEW AND THAT FURTHER REDUCTIONS WERE TO BE MADE AS CONDITIONS IN INDOCHINA WOULD PERMIT. THE POSSIBILITY OF A MAJOR HANOI OFFENSIVE DURING THE CURRENT DRY SEASON CAUSED US, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE RTG, TO POSTPONE FURTHER WITHDRAWALS OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT. HOWEVER, WE NOW BELIEVE THAT THE PROSPECT OF A LARGE-SCALE DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE THIS YEAR HAS RECEDED AND THAT THE IMPROVEMENT IN SVN'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES PERMITS THE DRAWDOWN. WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE CAN PLAN NOW ON FURTHER REDUCTIONS WITHOUT RISK THAT THIS WILL HAVE A DESTABILIZING EFFECT IN INDOCHINA. OUR REMAINING COMBAT FORCE SHOULD BE ADEQUATE TO MEET FUTURE CONTINGENCIES, BUT IF NECESSARY WE WOULD EXPECT TO BE ABLE, WITH RTG CONCURRENCE, TO SEND AIR UNITS BACK TO THAILAND TEMPORARILY TO COPE WITH ANY EMERGENCIES.

4. NO PLANS HAVE YET BEEN MADE FOR REDUCTIONS AFTER 1974. WHAT WE DO IN 1975 AND THEREAFTER WILL DEPEND UPON HOW WE AND THE RTG APPRAISE THE SITUATION LATER THIS YEAR.
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